

Preparing for Natural and Intentional Disasters

Natural and Intentional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness

The Budget includes \$39.9 million (\$29.8 million General Fund and \$10.1 million other funds) and 75 positions to enhance statewide emergency preparedness, mitigation, and response activities. The state will also leverage available federal funds to increase our security. This commitment will enable the creation of rapid response medical forces, improve disease detection and response capabilities, and increase safeguards for California's food supply and agricultural industries.

Health Care Surge Capacity

While pandemic influenza or a moderate event cannot be predicted with certainty, available medical and scientific information indicate that all Californians must prepare for the possibility that avian flu could mutate into a form that can be transmitted from human to human, and ultimately spread rapidly. Further, the State must be prepared for a moderate event that can potentially impact thousands of Californians.

In an effort to address the state's needs during a moderate event or pandemic influenza, the Budget includes \$18.3 million General Fund and 3 positions to allow the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) to purchase and manage three mobile field hospitals that could be rapidly deployed for emergency medical response in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The mobile field hospitals will be fully supplied with all requisite medical equipment and supplies to provide emergency medical treatment following a disaster.

Preparing for Natural and Intentional Disasters

Each hospital will have enough bed capacity to provide medical services for up to 200 disaster victims. The hospitals will be strategically placed so that the EMSA can respond rapidly to a disaster that occurs in any area of the state.

The Budget includes \$195.8 million (\$161.3 million General Fund) and 8.5 positions to enable the Department of Health Services (DHS) to increase patient care capacity. The ability of the health care system to “surge” to meet the demands of responding to an emergency event also depends on the availability of beds, supplies and equipment, and staff. This Budget includes funding for the purchase of the following:

- 3.7 million courses of antivirals purchased at a discounted price made possible by an offer of 25 percent federal matching funds in addition to the 68,000 courses provided for emergency preparedness.
- 2,400 ventilators and durable machines, which can operate on battery power and without compressed oxygen, and will be disseminated according to local needs.
- More than 50 million masks for healthcare workers as they care for patients during an influenza pandemic.
- Supplies and equipment for alternate care sites to increase the number of general medical-surgical and intensive care beds available throughout the state.
- Development of state guidance on standards of care, licensing, reimbursement, hospital surge plan templates, and standardized training curricula and exercises for surge response.

State and Local Response

The Budget includes an increase of \$29 million (\$21.3 million General Fund) and 33 new positions to support California’s public health system’s capacity to respond to natural and intentional disasters, including bioterrorism, outbreaks of infectious diseases, and other threats to public health.

Funding will allow the DHS and local public health systems to strengthen responses to public health emergencies, including pandemic influenza, reinforce laboratory infrastructure and staffing, and expand disease surveillance. While these efforts in many instances are targeted toward an influenza pandemic, the infrastructure being developed will be capable of responding to other natural and intentional disasters that jeopardize public health. The Budget includes funding for the following:

Preparing for Natural and Intentional Disasters

- \$17.4 million (\$11.7 million General Fund) for local health departments to support local activities related to the prevention of a pandemic influenza outbreak.
- \$4.2 million General Fund to strengthen the state's laboratory infrastructure, provide staffing resources to conduct more efficient testing, increase laboratory surge capacity, conduct influenza-specific testing, and establish predoctoral and postdoctoral training programs to provide a qualified pool of candidates to replace local public health laboratory directors as they retire.
- \$3.4 million (\$2.1 million General Fund) to expand state efforts and assist local agencies in how to plan, respond, train for, and recover from disasters and terrorist incidents that could result from chemical and radiological contamination of food, water, and the environment.
- \$1.5 million General Fund to purchase 68,000 courses of antivirals that California will need during a pandemic.
- \$1.3 million General Fund to expand and maintain state and local capacity to conduct communicable disease surveillance, which is the basis for disease detection and response to outbreaks or bioterrorism events.
- \$465,000 (\$407,000 General Fund) to strengthen pandemic influenza planning efforts, conduct epidemiologic investigations of influenza and respiratory disease outbreaks, and provide epidemiologic and statistical support to the infectious disease laboratories.
- \$359,000 federal funds to conduct exercises of pandemic influenza response plans and procedures, collaborate with local health departments, tribal entities, military installations, health care entities, and Metropolitan Medical Response System entities and expand the hardware capacity of the California Health Alert Network system.
- \$350,000 federal funds to cross train existing state staff to increase the state's capacity to respond to a major disaster. The DHS will train existing frontline public health field investigators to more effectively respond to anticipated infectious disease events.
- The Budget also includes \$103.8 million federal funds, as California continues to receive grants from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Health Resources and Services Administration under the 2002 Department of Defense and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States Act.

Department of Food and Agriculture

The Budget Act includes \$5.2 million (\$3.6 million General Fund) and 23 positions to protect the state's economy and natural resources, and rapidly detect and respond in the event of a disease outbreak or infestation. This funding includes a personal protection program for first responders to plant and animal disease outbreaks, rural-urban community outreach and disease surveillance programs to educate localities about risks and prevention, and expanded laboratory capacity for rapid testing and technical expertise.

Warning Center Staffing

The Budget Act includes an increase of \$492,000 General Fund and 7 positions for the California State Warning Center, operated by the Office of Emergency Services, to ensure that the Center has sufficient staff for 24-hour coverage and can adequately perform notifications when emergencies arise.

Department of Fish and Game

The Budget Act includes \$1.1 million General Fund and 14 positions in the Department of Fish and Game to detect avian influenza in wild birds in California. A particularly virulent strain of avian influenza has been detected in birds in several regions of Asia, Africa and Europe, raising concerns that the virus could be carried to the state by migratory birds, and could mutate into a form easily transmittable among human beings.

Emergency Medical Services Authority

A supplemental appropriations bill, Chapter 26, Statutes of 2006, provided \$2.3 million (\$1.6 million General Fund) to allow the Emergency Medical Services Authority to purchase personal protective equipment for 1,500 ambulances. This equipment will provide ambulance personnel with a greater level of protection against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear events and will enable them to be deployed to offer public assistance during a disaster.

The Budget also includes \$1.8 million federal funds for the development, implementation, and administration of three emergency medical disaster response teams to be known as the California Medical Assistance Teams (CalMATs). The CalMATs will consist of 360 volunteer medical personnel that will be under state control on a contingency basis, in order to provide immediate emergency medical response during and immediately after a catastrophic disaster.